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# ASCS BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service

U. S. Department of Agriculture

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## ASCS DEFENSE ACTIVITIES

The objective of the defense preparedness program in the United States Department of Agriculture is to maintain a state of readiness to carry out food and agricultural programs under wartime conditions. In this event USDA must be able to mobilize its forces rapidly, without substantial reorganization. It also must provide leadership and guidance to State and local governments, farmers, the food industry, and the public to insure conservation and continuity of the nation's food supply and the preservation of agricultural and forestry resources.

Defense responsibilities in USDA stem from regular program authorities and Executive orders assigning emergency preparedness functions to the Secretary pursuant to statute. These responsibilities in turn have been assigned by the Secretary to agencies whose regular activities bear a close relationship to programs that would be essential in a defense emergency. The Assistant to the Secretary, Intergovernmental Affairs, coordinates defense preparedness in USDA.

Within ASCS, each Deputy Administrator supervises defense preparedness by the Divisions, staffs, and offices under his jurisdiction. The unit in ASCS most prominently associated with defense is the Emergency Preparedness Division, which reports to the Deputy Administrator for Programs and coordinates defense preparedness within ASCS.

ASCS personnel are experienced in the administration of farm programs, programs to alleviate the effects of natural disasters, and programs involving resources of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). This experience would be valuable in coordinating the following defense emergency programs:

### ASCS

- Agricultural production including emergency controls on feed and seed and on domestic distribution of farm equipment and fertilizer; and emergency controls on grain storage and distribution and on food processing, storage, and distribution through the wholesaler level.
- Analyzing the emergency capabilities of agriculture, the food industry and support industries to supply requirements.
- Assessing effects of attack on assigned resources.
- Guidance and information on emergency plans to agricultural and food industries and to State governments.

- Determining the needs of agriculture, the food industry, and related agribusinesses for supporting materials, manpower, supplies and services necessary for essential operations, and providing assistance to these industries in obtaining these inputs and services.
- Facilitating the rehabilitation of food, agricultural and related agribusiness facilities.
- Providing assistance to the Assistant to the Secretary, Intergovernmental Affairs, including:
  - Consolidation of all claims for materials, manpower, equipment, supplies, and services to support defense program responsibilities of USDA.
  - Coordinating activities relating to expansion of productive capacity, materials, and facilities under the Defense Production Act of 1950, as amended.
  - Back-up assistance on interdepartmental and international meetings relating to defense preparedness.
  - Servicing USDA State and county emergency boards.
  - Coordinating preemergency defense reporting.

#### CCC

- Procurement of needed food and agricultural commodities under the CCC Charter Act to provide emergency food supplies, and the management of any commodity inventories to assure their availability in an emergency.
- Making reimbursable disbursements for FmHA emergency production loans when there is a breakdown in mail services or in activities of the FmHA Finance Office or the Disbursing Office of the Treasury.
- Guaranteeing or making emergency loans needed to process, store, and distribute food and other agricultural commodities, to mix and distribute fertilizer, and to distribute farm equipment and other farm supplies.
- Guaranteeing payment to firms authorized by USDA to provide a commodity under the jurisdiction of USDA or a related service.

USDA defense preparedness programs are coordinated by its emergency boards covering each State, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, and almost 3,000 counties. Members of these boards are representatives of USDA agencies having field defense responsibilities. The boards also estimate the amount of rural damage caused by major natural disasters, and coordinate USDA activities identified with disasters which occur within their geographic areas.

ASCS State Executive Directors represent ASCS on the USDA State emergency boards and serve as chairmen. They also supervise the defense preparedness measures taken by the USDA county boards. The ASCS County Executive Director is the ASCS member of the USDA county emergency board and usually serves as chairman of the board.

In a defense emergency, if communications with higher USDA authority were cut off, both USDA State and county board chairmen would have authority to make urgent program decisions affecting their geographic areas in accordance with established policies.